



CYC 809

Trauma Informed Practice

4_2_Multigenerational trauma

TOPIC: Multigenerational Historical Trauma and Indigenous Peoples

Trauma constructs such as P.T.S.D., and traumatic stress, and almost all the known effective treatments (CYC interventions being a notable exception), all originate in a colonial worldview. Trauma needs to be understood in a more wholistic manner and, as the society evolves to be more inclusive, less binary and colonialist, the wisdom of a diversity of thought is coming to be respected.

The construct of historical trauma, and a historical trauma response, was first put forward by a Lakota Social Worker named Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1988). She argued that cumulative trauma, and historical trauma, were synonymous and that these concepts reflect the cumulation of injury across the lifespan and then generations. While she was reacting to the pathologizing viewpoint often adopted by those from the discipline of Social Work, Child and Youth Care practitioners have much to learn from her argument.

Efforts at colonization, assimilation and other such attempts at silencing indigenous and other knowledges, have also hindered the bringing forward of traditional healing methods as well. Brave Heart notes that her theory "describes massive cumulative trauma across generations rather than the more limiting diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is inadequate at capturing the influence and attributes of native trauma" (2004: 7).

In the Canadian context, the cultural genocide that has unfolded, and continues since the settlers arrived, has resulted in multigenerational trauma. As detailed in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canada is founded on a colonizing agenda that has systematically attempted the cultural genocide of the First Peoples of this land, resulting in multigenerational historical trauma. That the cultural genocide continues to unfold



The School of Child and Youth Care

Image description: Graffiti tag of school logo

©Dr. Kim Snow 2026

as evidenced by the disproportional representation in tertiary systems (child welfare, justice), and by the violence that is racism, the accumulation of trauma continues to this day. The medicalization of trauma and the colonized health systems are typically disconnected from Indigenous healing methods.

*Brave Heart, MYH (2004). The historical trauma response among Natives and its relationship to substance abuse: A Lakota illustration". In E. Nebelkopf and M. Phillips (eds.). Healing and mental health for Native Americans. MD: AltaMira Press.

Language, Culture and Self-Determination

This week we watched a Ted Talk given by Diane Hill from the Oneida of the Thames First Nations community. It is linked here

<https://youtu.be/HOAYbxJGgDQ>

Language is a key to any culture and the colonizing efforts to attempt to erase culture have required the preservation of languages in order for them not to be lost.

First Voices is an example of such preservation efforts. Their website allows you to explore a number of First Peoples' languages.

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data>

Traditional forms of healing

The FNHA is a British Columbian health association that comprises of over 200 First Nations individuals and communities that has a mandate for health promotion and disease prevention. Please review this discussion about the impacts of colonisation on the health and wellbeing of First Peoples'. You can review their educational resource at the First Nations Health Authority website:

<https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-for-first-nations/our-history-our-health>

Cultural Genocide and the lasting impacts

The TRC provides documentary evidence of the lasting impacts of the efforts towards cultural genocide by the Canadian state. The APA defines cultural



The School of Child and Youth Care

Image description: Graffiti tag of school logo

©Dr. Kim Snow 2026

genocide as the “destruction of a culture’s heritage, values, and practices, usually by another, dominant cultural group”.

Examples of the maintenance of structural oppression

- Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately represented in tertiary systems
- Basic need inequity disproportionately impacts on Indigenous Peoples
- Removal of children, attempts to destroy language, and unexplained missing individuals are all tactics of a genocidal state as outlined by the UN definition.